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Behind the brand: Sugarbird Gin flies the flag for positive change... and sexy branding

by **Michael Bratt** — November 22, 2018 in **Media Mecca**

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Baubles filled with gin, and a box set pairing gin with tonic water are the two festive packaging offerings that Sugarbird Gin has launched for holiday season. The Media Online chatted to co-founder, Rob Heyns, to find out more.

A: We were sitting in the Makro buyer's office and brainstorming between our team and theirs, that if gin is where it's at this season, how do we do something that is crazy and exciting for the consumer and a no-brainer purchase for them, that also ties into festive celebrations and gift giving.

We came across this idea of filling baubles with gin and Makro said they would back it if we could make it work in a month.

For the other product, we just noticed that pairing gin and tonic really works for the consumer. We also saw that many combo gift packs are ugly, so we tried to make a box that is very aesthetically pleasing, very in line with our brand, and something that you want to give someone as a gift.

Q: How do these offerings tie in with the Sugarbird Gin brand story?

A: There's two lines that tie together everything that we do in our brand. Our community-driven efforts are all driven towards us being entrepreneurial and innovative, but also supporting young entrepreneurs and involving them in our business. And our slogan, is Just Good Gin, so giving people good gin, at an affordable price and making it accessible.

Q: The challenges of the campaign?

A: There were four of them. Firstly, sourcing the raw materials and convincing people to make them for us, and customised, on extremely short notice (in a month) and at a cost-effective price.

Then, the next challenge was putting the packaging together (filling the baubles with the gin, adding the ribbons, packing the boxes). We hired people from all over Cape Town and family members came to help and we worked long hours to get it done.

Thirdly, was doing this campaign without a purchase order, so we took a massive risk doing it without a PO, because we are a new supplier. And fourthly, cash flow remains a challenge.

Q: Has anything like this been done before?

A: Nothing like it in South Africa. The baubles, something similar was done in the UK, so [redacted] it, but definitely a South African first, especially on this scale.

Q: Sugarbird Gin will be involved in several upcoming events including Whisky Live in JHB (31 Oct – 02 Nov), Wade Bales Cap Classique & Gin Affair 2018, CPT (27&28 Oct) JHB (24&25 Nov), Endless Daze Festival (02 Nov), Gin & Tonic Festival JHB (01 Dec). Talk us through your participation in events and having a presence there.

A: We do many types of activations including tasting events. We also have mobile bars for weddings and corporates. We find that human interaction is important. Whenever there’s an opportunity to engage with consumers and give them a chance to taste our product and talk them through it, we take that because that’s our grassroots building a bit of a following and exposure and sharing an experience with them. With this, we will sit in their mind and they will become loyal fans of Sugarbird.

Sugarbird Gin is just under a year old, launched in 2017 by League of Beers founders Nzeka Biyela and Rob Heyns, and distilling experts Kelly and Mark Goldsworthy. Crowdfunding was used to raise capital for the venture, and it was so successful that Sugarbird Gin broke South African crowdfunding records. The brand also recently scooped a gold award in the ‘Distilled’ category at the 2018 Vitis Vinifera Awards.

Michael Bratt is a multimedia journalist at Wag the Dog, publishers of The Media Online and The Media. Follow him on Twitter @MichaelBratt8

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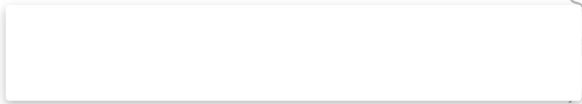
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